

LITERATURE AND
UTOPIAN POLITICS IN
SEVENTEENTH-CENTURY
ENGLAND

ROBERT APPELBAUM



CAMBRIDGE
UNIVERSITY PRESS

PUBLISHED BY THE PRESS SYNDICATE OF THE UNIVERSITY OF CAMBRIDGE
The Pitt Building, Trumpington Street, Cambridge, United Kingdom

CAMBRIDGE UNIVERSITY PRESS
The Edinburgh Building, Cambridge CB2 2RU, UK
40 West 20th Street, New York, NY 10011-4211, USA
10 Stamford Road, Oakleigh, VIC 3166, Australia
Ruiz de Alarcón 13, 28014 Madrid, Spain
Dock House, The Waterfront, Cape Town 8001, South Africa

<http://www.cambridge.org>

© Robert Appelbaum 2002

This book is in copyright. Subject to statutory exception
and to the provisions of relevant collective licensing agreements,
no reproduction of any part may take place without
the written permission of Cambridge University Press.

First published 2002

Printed in the United Kingdom at the University Press, Cambridge

Typeface Baskerville Monotype 11/12.5 pt. *System* L^AT_EX 2_ε [TB]

A catalogue record for this book is available from the British Library.

Library of Congress cataloguing in publication data

Appelbaum, Robert, 1952–

Literature and utopian politics in seventeenth-century England / by Robert Appelbaum.

p. cm.

Includes bibliographical references and index.

ISBN 0 521 00915 4 (hardback)

1. English literature – Early modern, 1500–1700 – History and criticism. 2. Politics and literature – Great Britain – History – 17th century. 3. Great Britain – Politics and government – 1603–1714. 4. Utopias in literature. 5. Utopias. I. Title.

PR438.P65 A67 2002

820.9'358 – dc21 2001043350 CIP

ISBN 0 521 81082 5 hardback

Contents

<i>Acknowledgments</i>	<i>page ix</i>
Introduction	I
1 The look of power	12
1. New beginnings, 1603	12
2. The Columbus topos: how to hope	24
3. The look of power	35
4. Baconian hope	49
2 Utopian experimentalism, 1620–1638	64
1. The world in the moon, the news on the ground	64
2. Varieties of subjective idealism	73
3. New Plymouth and early Massachusetts	76
4. A “utopia of mine owne”; or, “all must be as it is”	81
5. <i>The Man in the Moone</i>	88
6. <i>New Atlantis</i>	93
3 “Reformation” and “Desolation”: the new horizons of the 1640s	102
1. “That new Utopia. . .”	102
2. Babylon’s fall	109
3. The rhetorical situation of a sitting Parliament	112
4. Amelioration: <i>Macaria</i> and <i>A Discoverie of Infinite Treasure</i>	116
5. The war breaks out	125
6. The Leveller movement: “we are the men of the present age”	129
4 Out of the “true nothing,” 1649–1653	140
1. Ruining the work of time	140
2. Fifth Monarchy economics	145
3. Winstanley the Digger	153
5 From constitutionalism to aestheticization, 1654–1670	172
1. In retrospect, 1654 and beyond	172

2. After the Rump, the search for “substance”	176
3. Harrington and the commonwealth of Oceana	178
4. First principles and the crisis of 1659: “Utopian Ragusa”	188
5. Restoration and aestheticization	197
6. Margaret Cavendish and the Blazing World	200
7. <i>The Tempest</i> redivivus	210

<i>Notes</i>	217
--------------	-----

<i>Index</i>	252
--------------	-----

CHAPTER I

The look of power

I. NEW BEGINNINGS, 1603

Shortly after the failure of the Essex Rebellion of 1601, James VI of Scotland sent his two best political operatives on the long road back to London, charging them to try to repair the damage the Rebellion might have done to his chances for succeeding to the English throne. James himself may have been involved in the Rebellion, which Essex had led in part in order to assure that a Protestant partisan like James would inherit the crown; James had been in contact with Essex about this for some time. But whether or not James had a hand in it – England’s last feudal “rising” in the opinion of many historians – the Rebellion’s failure made him afraid for his chances for succession, and worried about the country’s stability as a whole. So he decided to take action. He was determined to redouble his agents’ efforts at intelligence-gathering and diplomacy, while continuing to try to lobby the Queen. And he was also ready to instigate a number of conspiratorial motions and wrest control of England without the Queen’s blessings, by extra-legal means if necessary. “Find out,” he told the Earl of Mar and Edward Bruce, in secret correspondence,

with which of two sorts of discontentment the people are presently possessed: whether it be only against the present rulers in the court (keeping always that due reservation of love and reverence to the Queen which they were ever wont to do), or [whether] the discontentment be grown to that height that they are not able any longer to comport either with prince or state . . .¹

Next, he says, assuming that “the people” are still loyal to Elizabeth, attempts should be made to get her public support and have her declare him her successor; and barring that, to enter into “private negotiation with the country”:

first, to obtain all the certainty ye can of the town of London that in the due time they will favour the right; next, to renew and confirm your acquaintance

with the Lieutenant of the Tower; thirdly to obtain as great a certainty as ye can of the fleet by means of [Lord Thomas Howard] and of some seaports; fourthly to secure the hearts of as many noblemen and knights as ye can get dealing with and to be resolved what every one of their parts shall be at that great day; fifthly, to foresee anent armour for every shire, that against that day my enemies have not the whole commandment of the armour and my friends only be unarmed; sixthly, that . . . ye may distribute good seminaries through every shire that may never leave harvest till the day of reaping come; and generally to leave all things in such certainty and order as the enemies be not able in the meantime to lay such bars in my way as shall make things remediless when the time shall come. (175–76)

While still hoping to accede to the throne by simple nomination, in other words, James was planning to wrest control of England by mounting a *coup d'état* if necessary. He wanted the support of the mayor and aldermen of London, and the “hearts” of the country gentry, their affection secured by bribes, if necessary; but he also wanted to secure the Tower and the militia it controlled, as well as the navy at various ports and the garrisons scattered through the country. If the nation would not be given to him, he wanted to be able to take it – not by violence so much as by a methodical appropriation of the instruments of state, including its instruments of legal violence.

As it happened, James’s preparations would turn out to be unnecessary, since within weeks Robert Cecil, Elizabeth’s chief counselor, volunteered his support for James and began putting into operation a surer scheme for James’s accession than Mar and Bruce could have effected on their own.² When James came to throne on 24 March 1603 (new style) the transition of power went smoothly; indeed it has long been seen as one of the most peaceful and efficient changes of dynasty in early modern English history. “If ever,” wrote S. R. Gardiner, in a verdict that has seldom been challenged, “there was an act in which the nation was unanimous, it was the welcome with which the accession of the new sovereign was greeted.”³ Within hours after Elizabeth’s death the queen’s Privy Council proclaimed James the new king and sent instructions to magistrates throughout the country to keep to their posts, proclaim the king, and stifle dissent.⁴ The Council’s official representative Sir Robert Carey led a mass scramble into Scotland which has taken on the quality of a national legend, a race to be the first Englishman to tell James the news. Within a matter of days, governing bodies and officials throughout the nation had publicly accepted James as the new sovereign by proclamation; James had been reached – nearly

mobbed – at Edinburgh; a paramilitary retinue had gathered around him, and the monarch was making his official entry across the border into England. A contemporary report put the early sequence of events in this way:

Thursday the 24th of March, some two houres after midnight, departed the spirit of that great Princesse [Elizabeth], from the prison of her weake body, which now sleepes in the sepulchre of her Grandfather. The Councell of State, and the Nobilitie, on whom the care of all the country chiefly depended, immediately assembling together (no doubt assisted with the spirit of truth), considering the infallible right of our Sovereigne Lord King James, tooke such order that the newes of the Queene's death should no sooner be spread, to deject the hearts of the people, but at the instant they should be comforted with the proclaiming of the King.

Being heron determined, Sir Robert Carey tooke his journey in post towards Scotland, to signifie to the King's majestie the sad tidings of his Royall sister's death, and the joyfull hearts of his subjects, that expected no comfort but in and by his Majesties's blessed government. This noble Gentleman's care was such, that he intermitted no time; but notwithstanding his sundry shift of horses, and some falles that bruised him very sore, he by the way proclaimed the King at Morpeth and Alnwick. And on Saturday, comming to Barwick [Berwick], acquainting his worthy brother Sir John Carey how all things stood, boasted on to Edenburgh, where he attained that night, having ridden neare 300 miles.⁵

Eight days later (6 April) James made his way from Edinburgh into England at Berwick, attended by a large retinue of English and Scottish soldiers, officials, and other dignitaries. "Happy day," our chronicler goes on to say, "when peaceably so many warlike English gentlemen went to bring in an English and Scottish King, both included in one person . . . But the King of Peace have glory, that so peaceably hath ordained a King decended from the Royall Blood of either Nation . . ." (62–63).

James himself would remember the occasion of his entry into England and the festivities accompanying his progress to London as a nearly mystical event, where the nation received him as if its lawful husband. In his speech to open Parliament eleven months later, speaking politically with a certain agenda in mind, to be sure, but also no doubt sincerely, he said,

Can I ever be able . . . to forget your unexpected readinesse and alacritie, your ever memorable resolution, and your most wonderfull conjunction and harmonie of your hearts in declaring and embracing mee as your undoubted and lawfull King and Governour? Or shall it ever bee blotted out of my minde, how at my first entrie into this Kingdome, the people of all sorts rid and ran, nay rather flew to meet mee? their eyes flaming nothing but sparkles of affection, their mouthes and tongues uttering nothing but sounds of joy, their hands, feete,

and all the rest of their members in their gestures discoursing a passionate longing, and earnestnesse to meete and embrace their new Sovereigne. *Quid ergo retribuam?*⁶

The language of love would be repeated often in association with James's accession; it would be connected both to the fusion of the nation with its newly proclaimed king and to the unification of the nation with itself. James would be figured as a mender of broken hearts, as a maker of "harmonie" among the "hearts" of the country, and, with flagrant eroticism, as a groom being passionately adored and received by his bride, the English nation. "We / Do Make thee King of our affection, / King of our love: a passion born more free, / And most unsubject to dominion," Samuel Daniel wrote in his "Panegyric to the King."⁷ "Such a fire of love was kindled in every brest," Thomas Dekker would write on the subject of the king's formal entry into London the following year – even the breasts of "little children."⁸ "See how all harts ar heald, that erst were maymed," Sir John Harington wrote in his "Welcome to the King."⁹ During the course of James's progress through London James would be compared to a wide array of more or less eroticized allegorical figures, and his erotic attractions and energies associated with a variety of utopian idealizations of the body politic. He would be imagined as a reincarnation of the nation's legendary founder, the Trojan Brutus, returned to re-inseminate the nation; he would be hailed as a "broade spreading tree" of majestic peace, at once verdant, virile, fertile, and protective; he would be spoken of as a new Phoenix, bringing the state to life out of the ashes of Elizabeth's death; he would be allegorized as a new Caesar Augustus, bringing empire and peace, and as a new Solomon, bringing wisdom, justice, and benign paternalism; he would be figured as a new (masculinized) Astraea, God of Justice (Elizabeth had been the properly feminine Astraea); as a restorer of order over the old world and the new, the whole *orbis terrarum*; and as the bearer, by divine Providence, of "the golden Age Restor'd."¹⁰ The similitude of romantic love, of the healed heart and the passionate embrace, of familial domestic peace and seed-bearing masculine sexuality, is seldom far from the surface of the language of James's entry. "Let ignorance know, great King," says the figure of Electra in Jonson's concluding speech for the progress,

this day is thine,
And doth admit no night: but all do shine,
As well nocturnal as diurnal fires,
To add unto the flame of our desires . . .¹¹

Even James's first Parliament adopted the language of love. "The true cause," the Commons submitted to James in its "Apology" of 1604, "of our extraordinary great cheerfulness and joy in performing that day's duty [of accepting your accession] was the great and extraordinary love which we bare towards your majesty's most royal and renowned person and a longing thirst to enjoy the happy fruits of your most wise, religious, just, virtuous, and gracious heart."¹²

The language of love played an integral part in what may perhaps best be thought of as the "social drama" that the citizens of England performed on the occasion of James's accession.¹³ Faced with the death of the queen who had ruled the country successfully for over four decades, the citizens of England performed a sequence of more or less improvised ceremonies and rituals, which mediated the transition of government and revived the relations of power through which the new government would operate: the proclamations, the race to Scotland, the royal entry, the progresses, the panegyrics, the coronation ceremony, the masques, the pageant through London, the summoning and opening of Parliament. The language of love expressed the willingness of English citizens to participate in the drama and accept the drama's ramifications; it betokened unanimous consent. Since the English had not yet adopted a constitutionally or otherwise legally sanctioned mechanism for the transition of power, apart from the delivering of an "Oath of Coronation" which itself had already been relegated by legal convention to a subordinate role in the mechanisms of sovereignty, the subjects of English government were obliged to improvise a performance which would behaviorally (rather than merely legally) enact, confirm, and consolidate the change of government.¹⁴ There was no other method of succession available to them, and if enough subjects of sufficient means and will had not been able to carry off their performance the nation might have been faced, as it had been during the dynastic wars of the fifteenth century, with the problem of an inadequately legitimated king, vulnerable to popular challenge. The social drama they performed overcame the possibility of contention by a kind of deliberate behavioral and semiotic excess. The language of love was no less a traditional part of the rituals of power than the poetic and rhetorical forms through which it was expressed; but like other discourses surrounding the accession, it was excessively elaborated and recited, excessively appealed to as a grounds for re-imagining the will of the state, as if it might transform the hard facts of James's rise to power into an unopposable "outpouring" of the body politic as a whole.

But the language of love is of course ambiguous, and – although this has probably not been sufficiently observed by political historians – the consent and the unanimity it signified was ambiguous as well. In the hands of the Parliamentarians, as also perhaps in the hands of ambitious court-poets like Samuel Daniel and John Harington, the language of love was used not only to express fusion and consolidation but also to mark a distinction, a separation of powers. The love the Commons bore for James, they were declaring, was freely given; it was bestowed as if it were the passion motivating a marriage contract. If disappointed in its hopes the Commons might as a result be less forthcoming in its relation to the king.¹⁵ “Now concerning the ancient right of the subjects of this realm,” the “Apology of the Commons” goes on to say, immediately after having declared its “great and extraordinary love” for James, “. . . the misinformation openly delivered to your majesty hath been in three things: first, that we hold not our privileges of right, but of grace only, renewed every parliament by way of donative upon petition, and so to be limited; secondly, that we are no court of record, etc. . . .”¹⁶ The waspish tone of the Commons’s language betrays the fact that in expressing love for the king, even a “passionate longing” for him, a number of James’s new subjects were also communicating that they expected something in return.

In a satiric vein, Dekker gave still another interpretation of passionate longing of the people for James and the utopian visions his accession seemed to summon. “Now dooes fresh bloud,” Dekker writes,

leap into the cheekes of the Courtier: the Souldier now hangs up his armor and is glad that he shall feede upon the blessed fruits of peace: the Scholler sings Hymnes in honor of the Muses, assuring himselfe now that *Helicon* will be kept pure, because *Apollo* himselfe drinkes of it. Now the thriftie Citizen casts beyond the Moone and seeing the golden age returned into the world againe, resolves to worship no Saint but money. Trades that lay dead & rotten, and were in all mens opinion utterly dambd, started out of their trance, as though they had drunke of *Aqua Caelestis*, or Unicornes horne, and swore to fall to their olde occupation.

Going on to list the sudden wild ambitions of tailors, shopkeepers, blacksmiths, players, tobacconists, and tavern-keepers, he concludes, “*London* was never in the high way to preferment till now.” Preferment, profit, status, protection – that is what it was all about, on this reading, all the hyperbole, the celebrations, the “sparkles of affection,” the “fire of love.” In 1603 it was still true that the monarch had it in his power to make

or break a man's fortune overnight. For a number of subjects, whether aristocrats, country gentlemen, soldiers, scholars, merchants, or "projectors," James's accession seemed to represent an opening of opportunities; it inspired a renewal of wild hopes that under Elizabeth had been "utterly dambd." Monopolists and would-be monopolists looked for the awarding of new charters and grants; importers, exporters, and manufacturers looked for new trade regulations and pricing policies, the awarding of new licenses, and the abolition or at least the curtailment of monopolies; families among the middle gentry – hundreds of them, in fact – looked for nomination to the peerage, and the social status and privileges that entailed; men of letters, both University Wits and self-taught men like Ben Jonson, looked for a new outpouring of patronage, and a new state-sanctioned respect for the Muses. Reform-minded clerics, though Dekker significantly fails to mention them, looked for changes in the management and practices of the Church, as expressed for example in their "Millenary Petition," to which over a thousand clergymen were said to subscribe, and to which over seven hundred individuals did in fact subscribe.¹⁷ Members of the House of Commons, more politically and vaguely, were content to allude, as cited above, to their "longing thirst to enjoy the happy fruits of your most wise, religious, just, virtuous, and gracious heart."

But beneath the consensual and opportunistic longings of James's new subjects, there was yet another reality, which brought with it still another valence to the love of the people for the sovereign. This was the reality of subjection, brought on by the legal, theoretical, and political complexities of James's succession and the combination of *Realpolitik* and idealized absolutism that James and his allies used to overcome them. We have already seen some aspects of this other reality in James's preparations to take England by an armed but hopefully unopposed *coup d'état* and in the swift action taken by the Council of State meeting the night of Elizabeth's death to put James's accession into motion. The crown was not only given to James; it was also taken. "I am the Husband, and the whole isle is my lawfull Wife," James said in the most famous words of his opening speech to Parliament of 1604. "I am the Head, and it is my Body," he added, characteristically giving in to the excessiveness of the political language of the moment; "I am the shepherd, and it is my flocke."¹⁸ If James put himself forward as someone who had received the spontaneous love of his subjects, and who therefore owed them loving kindness in return ("*Quid ergo retribuam?*"), he also emphasized that his solicitude toward his subjects derived first of all from the interest he had

in them as a possessor toward his possessions – as a husband toward a wife, a head toward a body, or a shepherd toward his flock.¹⁹ James had theoretically assumed possession of the English nation, and indeed over the whole isle of what he was beginning to promote, in another innovation, as the united kingdom of Great Britain.²⁰ He had seized the nation – by right, by arrangement with the ruling elite of Elizabeth’s government, and unopposed; but he had first of all seized it, appropriated and quasi-erotically enthralled it.

It bears noting that even with the assistance of Robert Cecil and his colleagues (among them, as it will be important to remember later on, Francis Bacon) and even in spite of his grandiose political theories, James’s openly legal claims to the English throne were uncertain.²¹ Although his genealogical descent from Henry Tudor was clear, his accession could only be effected in direct contradiction to statutory law and royal proclamation, which expressly favored another family and forbade the Stuart line from assuming the English throne. James’s accession, moreover, was held by a number of legal scholars to be in violation of common law, which prohibited foreigners from inheriting property in England. In order for James to come into power a number of conventions and legal niceties had to be circumvented; and the accession itself had to be orchestrated in such a way that James would immediately receive not only the longing of his subjects, but also the tools for enforcing their obedience. Challenges from other pretenders to the throne (there were at least eleven of them, and two of them, the Earl of Suffolk and the Spanish Infanta, had significant followings) had to be thwarted. The instruments of power – legal and extra-legal, non-violent and violent – had to be appropriated. It was not enough that power be transferred; before it could be transferred it had to have been already pre-empted. That James had a few years before developed a political theory that justified and explained the pre-emption of power upon which his accession was based, a theory of divine right absolutism which was already gaining in currency among the ruling elite in England even before the publication of James’s *Basilikon Doron* and *The Trew Law of Free Monarchies* made it into a quasi-official doctrine, was a help both to the advance party led by Cecil and the multitude who decided to give their “heart and voice” (as the expression went) to the accession.²² But the social drama that was performed, complex and polysemous as its language and performance may have been, was first of all orchestrated and initiated by a ruling elite which had already pre-empted the instruments of government in the first act and scene of the drama.

Recall the words of the chronicler: "The Councell of State, and the Nobilitie, on whom the care of all the country chiefly depended, immediately assembling together (no doubt assisted with the spirit of truth), considering the infallible right of our Sovereigne Lord King James, tooke such order . . ." The language the chronicler uses here deliberately smothers the possibility of dissent; it at once nullifies legitimate theoretical difficulties ("the spirit of truth," "the infallible right") and promotes its subjects ("The Councell of State, and the Nobilitie, on whom the care of all the country chiefly depended") to a position of authority that they did not in fact legally possess.²³ The language, moreover, deliberately places "the country" under "the care" of its power elite. "[T]he hearts of the people . . . should be comforted with the proclaiming of the King," the elite decides. If the affection of the people is what is at stake, it is a deliberately feminized affection, commanded from above. The first thing the assembled councilors and lords are establishing as they proclaim the king is their own authority to assume "the care of all the country" and take whatever measures are necessary for conserving it. The second thing they are establishing is their determination to use that authority to put the country in the hands of the sovereign whom they have themselves hand-picked, although in doing so they are subsuming themselves under a principle of sovereignty that allegedly transcends them and legitimates their behavior from above.

This is the principle of "free monarchy," as James was calling it, where the king knows himself to be divinely "ordained for them [his people] and they not for him," and kings are "the authours and makers of the Lawes, and not the Lawes of the kings."²⁴ It is also a principle of what the members of Cecil's party were identifying as a "reason of state" or "intent of the state," which they were communicating through the performance of various partly improvised rituals of power. "Notwithstanding his sundry shift of horses, and some falles that bruised him very sore," as well as his haste, the chronicler takes care to mention, Sir Robert Carey, representing the Council of State, took the time to proclaim the king at Morpeth and Alnwick, and then to confer with his brother at Berwick, and inform him "how all things stood." The brother, Sir John Carey, the chronicle goes on to say,

who, like a worthy Souldier and politicke Statesman, considering [Berwick] was a towne of great import, and a place of warre . . . caused all the Garrison to be summoned together, as also the Mayor, Aldermene, and Burgesses, in whose presence he made a short and pithie Oration, including her Majesties's death, and signifying the intent of the State, for submitting to their lawfull Lord . . . (36)

The brothers, the one a representative of the late queen's Privy Council, the other a provincial Lieutenant Governor, shared a sense that the country was in a state of emergency, which it was their responsibility to control. It was urgent that the king be *proclaimed*, not only in London but everywhere possible, as soon as possible, even if it meant that Sir Robert had to pause several times while on his hasty mission to Scotland. It was equally urgent at Berwick, it being "a towne of great import, and a place of warre," that Sir John take command of the situation, the "worthy souldier and politicke Statesman" that he was, and make it understood "how all things stood." Sir John called together the three pre-eminent representatives of power in the district, and comported himself before them with an improvised formality that succeeded in commanding a kind of social compact from above. In a "pithie Oration," he signified "the intent of the State" – not his own intent, nor indeed the intent of any person or party in particular, but the intent "of the State," and ceremonially demanded that all of them publicly declare their acquiescence to it and "submit" to "their lawfull Lord." He was demanding what amounted to an old-fashioned pledge of fealty, following the traditional form of exacting such a pledge, but he was demanding it in the name of the impersonal power of "the State," bearer of an impersonal "intent," although the intent derived from the decision of a small party of councilors and representatives of the House of Lords.

That decision itself, though politic, was legally arbitrary and theoretically presumptive, an act of *force majeure*. The language of the original proclamation issued by the Council of State, which had been prepared in advance by Cecil and authorized by James (Bacon had prepared an alternative proclamation which was less strident and revealing) inadvertently betrays the transgressiveness of the decision to install James on the throne.²⁵ The document, whose intent the Carey brothers were urgently communicating northward, was as marked by rhetorical excess as any text connected with James's accession. From phrase to phrase and from clause to clause it betrayed the anxieties and doubts of the men who issued it no less than it advertised their resolve to appropriate and manage their reason of state.

We do now, hereby [it declares] with one full assent and consent of tongue and heart, publish and proclaim, that the high and mighty James the Sixth, King of Scotland, is now, by the death of our late Sovereign, Queen of England, of famous memory, become our only lawful, lineal, and rightful liege Lord, James the first, King of England, France, and Ireland, Defender of the Faith; to whom, as to our only just Prince, adorned (besides his undoubted right) with

all the rarest gifts of mind and body, to the infinite comfort of all his people and subjects, who shall live under him, we acknowledge all faith and constant obedience, with all hearty and humble affections, both during our natural lives for ourselves, and in behalf of our posterity: hereby protesting and declaring to all persons whatsoever, that, in this just and lawful act of ours, we are resolved . . .

The language of the proclamation duplicates the copious cautions of a legal deed (“One full assent and consent of tongue and heart,” “publish and proclaim,” “our only lawful, lineal, and rightful liege Lord”) but its double and triple formulas are intended to forestall the contradictions and inconsistencies inherent in what was in fact an extra-legal procedure. A “just” act is not necessarily a “lawful” one; a lawful act need not necessarily be just; but the proclamation is both at once. “Humble affection,” signifying submission, need not also be “hearty,” a term which signifies active choice; but theirs, again, is both at once. “Assent” and “consent,” amount to two different kinds of acts, one passive, one active; “faith” and “obedience” need not coincide. Most importantly, although the idea is embedded within a frame of qualifications so large that its special import could easily be overlooked, a “lawful” Lord, a “lineal” Lord, and a “rightful” Lord are actually three different things. And again, any of these three claims, taken separately, was subject to challenge.

When the council members finally certify what in the case of a legal and rightful transfer of power should have needed no certification, their own legitimacy as the authors of the proclamation, they betray the difficulties of their position by appealing to extra-legal qualifications, to “conscience,” “zeal,” “certain knowledge,” self-sacrifice, and “blood”:

in this just and lawful act of ours, we are resolved, by the favour of God’s holy assistance, and in the zeal of our conscience (warranted by certain knowledge of his undoubted right, as has been said before), to maintain and uphold his Majesty’s person and estate, as our only undoubted Sovereign Lord and King, with the sacrifice of our lives, lands, goods, friends, and adherents . . . to stand to the last drop of our blood. (28–29)

“God’s holy assistance,” the “zeal of our conscience,” and the resources of bloody warfare join together to certify not only the claim of James to the throne, but the claim of the claimers, the authors of a self-proclaimed “intent of the state,” to certify James’s “right.”²⁶ A type of armed, conscience-ratified, Calvinist providentialism, which corresponds with James’s published principles, ultimately takes the place of legal doctrine, and is used both to alter and to authenticate legal procedures.²⁷ Since it was acting on its own authority, although by tradition it had none, and

it could not as yet be so certain of the “hearts” of the people, “the Councill of State and the Nobilitie” perhaps had no choice but to assert their hegemony by right of divine sanction and the pledge of violence; but their language and conduct on the occasion was also a reflection of that larger reality of the “intent of the state” which James’s accession brought to the center of English political life. For despite all the rhetoric and ceremonial behavior that was used to disguise, naturalize, or displace it, and that quickly congealed into a myth of national unanimity, James’s accession was not only an act of peaceful succession; it was also an act of conquest, which brought with it a refashioning of many of the rules, aims, concepts, and socio-economic bases of political life, and a whole new “look of power” – a whole new set of specular conditions under which power might be imagined, arrogated, contested, and deployed. A look of power deriving from Tudor conventions but also supplanting them, which put the monarch at the center of the imaginary of the state and then identified the “intent” of one with the “intent” of the other. A look of power which established a politics of sublimity where the monarch and the state alike were elevated to the status of unobtainable objects of desire, the desideratum of the self-nominated political constituency. But a look of power, at the same time, where the monarch and “the state” were the ones who were doing the looking and emanating political desire. And a look of power in keeping with which the monarch and his ruling elite were laying claim to the rhetoric of political idealism, appropriating a discourse of ideal politics and its utopian implications. “The state” was being conquered by its own consent, for its own good, in keeping with its own aspirations; it was being transformed into what court mythology could now show to be what it had always intended to become. And in doing so, it was finding its own golden age to have been restored, “now in the end and fullnesse of time,” as James was to put it.²⁸ Political imperfection had come to an end. Perfection alone was to be raised to the level of discursive visibility; perfection alone was to be *seen*, and perfection alone was accorded the vantage point of *seeing*.

“His light sciential is,” as Jonson would have it reported of James in his first court masque, *The Masque of Blackness* of 1605. Past “mere nature,” it could “salve the rude defects of every creature.”²⁹ Great Britain, the new geopolitical creature invented with the ascension of James, “*A world divided from the world*,” is “Ruled by a sun that to this height doth grace it, / Whose beams shine day and night.” It comes as the fulfillment of a historical destiny, which is at once the reawakening of an “ancient dignity” and an innovative solution to a vexing problem. It comes as the

satisfaction of an eroticized longing, which finds expression in “sounds of joy,” the music of the dance (“*Here Tritons sounded,*” Jonson writes), and in the dance itself, “their hands, feete, and all the rest of their members in their gestures discoursing a passionate longing.” So “*they danced on shore,*” Jonson continues, “*every couple as they advanced severally presenting their fans, in one of which were inscribed their mixed names, in the other a mute hieroglyphic expressing their mixed qualities*” (235–39).³⁰ The king presides over these “mixed qualities.” He makes them whole. The golden age is finally restored: but only so far as the kingdom keeps dancing, and the king’s pleasure remains (as in the case of the Ethiopian princesses) their predominant object of desire.

2. THE COLUMBUS TOPOS: HOW TO HOPE

Meanwhile, far away from the court, in a work of fiction published in 1605, we hear from another kind of aspirant, speaking from what appears to be a rival outlook. The narrator of the fiction, Joseph Hall’s *Mundus Alter et Idem* (1605), recounts a conversation he had with a Frenchman, Peter Beroaldus, who was complaining about limits – the limits of his experience as a man of culture, the problems he has faced in trying to overcome those limits and experience the new, the “hard,” the “noble,” and in fact even to “travel,” to pass beyond sameness of life one finds throughout Europe and discover something truly different. “Really,” Beroaldus says,

I do not know what it means to travel. For if I were to cross the border of my native land to tread on your neighboring land, or to cross some narrow strait or river (for example the Rhine, or the Tweed), I would receive the name of “traveler” according to popular opinion. Yet one enjoys the same sky, the same stars, and scarcely even notices a change of soil. I do not see what is hard or noble about that.³¹

Beroaldus feels himself impelled to some sort of “heroic venture . . . one that will astonish this age and will make posterity always recall my memory with gratitude” (11). He gives the proper name of “traveler” only to men like Drake, Cavendish, Columbus, and Pizarro, to men “who either discovered new worlds by dangerous investigation or settled such discoveries” (11). And so Beroaldus has a scheme:

It has always disturbed me [he says], to meet constantly with *Terra Australis Incognita* on geographical maps, and indeed is there anyone who is not completely senseless who would read this without some silent indignation? For if they know it to be a *continent*, and a *southern* one, how can they then call it *unknown*? And if it

be unknown, why have all the geographers described the form and the location to me? They are idle men who can say it to be thus and still claim not to know it themselves! And finally, who will not be vexed to remain ignorant of that which it is profitable for us to know? (12)

Beroaldus is determined to go on an adventure to this unknown land, and to take his friends along with him, and he refuses to be deterred by unknown dangers – by the possibility, say, that monsters inhabit it.

We must certainly dare [he says], and certainly hope. Those apparitions of danger may frighten weak minds, but they serve to excite bolder spirits: for if fears were taken into account, no one would know any part of a country, or of a city, or even of a house except his own. It was for this one reason that that American continent was so long hidden, and moreover I believe it would still be hidden today had God himself not lately sent us a dove from heaven, who, plucking an olive branch from this land, taught us that there still remains some land left that is insufficiently concealed by the waves; ought not his name inherit perpetual fame and holiness from the thanks of his successors? Indeed, as long as there is an earth, likenesses of him will be circulated, which we will gaze upon, not without a certain reverence and astonishment. Nor, truthfully, does it sound to me any less honorific to be called *Discoverer of the New World* than to be called *conqueror*. Why shouldn't we win the same success and the same glory? Moreover, the famous and often repeated prophecy of the tragedian Seneca does not a little excite my mind, a prophecy which now rests to be fulfilled by us:

Time will come

After a long span of years, when the Ocean

Will relax the bonds of circumstances

And reveal a great continent. (14)

Beroaldus is an early and brilliant appearance of a figure that will show up often in seventeenth-century literature, an incarnation of what I will call the “Columbus topos.” He is a burlesque of that figure, as it happens, although the unsuspecting reader may not realize this at first. *Mundus Alter et Idem* unfolds into a sour critique of the world-conquering mentality and the utopian illusions motivating it. There is nothing worth discovering in the Terra Australis that the narrator of the fiction, “Mercurius Britannicus,” eventually visits, and nothing worth conquering. All one finds in the southernmost part of the world, the Terra Australis Incognita, the Antarctica of fable, are mirror images and exaggerations of the moral deformities prevalent in one's own society back home; and there is neither material success nor glory to be gained for one's troubles. In “Crapulia” the traveler encounters a land of joyless gluttony and dipsomania; in “Viraginia” he discovers a province ruled by lamentably unruly women;

in “Moronia” he journeys through a land of miscellaneous foolishness, from the institutions of Roman Catholicism to the projections of proto-capitalist schemers and would-be natural scientists, all of whom are ensnared in logical contradictions; in “Lavernia” he visits a land of unheroic thieves.³² At the end of thirty years, having “gazed upon,” having been “astonished at,” and having “laughed at” Terra Australis, “weakened by so much labor of traveling,” as he tells us, the narrator simply goes home (117). But it is one of the hallmarks of the Columbus topos in seventeenth-century England that the figure is contestable; it can be a sign either of precocious courage or, as in Hall, of foolish and pointless audacity; a reminder either that “we must certainly dare, and certainly hope,” or that the age of heroic enormity is permanently over, and the ambitious explorers and conquistadors of the day are condemned to the frustrations of belatedness. “Be careful, Beroaldus,” Hall has one of Beroaldus’s interlocutors interject, “when you erect so lofty a structure on so poor and slender a foundation. That Columbus of yours has fulfilled a long time ago whatever your tragic poet prophesied under divine inspiration. These are the ‘long span of years.’ It is obviously the great American continent that has emerged at this very time. What other age are you dreaming of, what other land?” (14). In point of fact, at the time that Hall’s satire appeared in print, preparations were being made for settling what would turn out to be Britain’s first successful, permanent colony in America; and within a few years one of the colony’s first officials would use the Columbus topos to justify the English colonial enterprise and appeal for public support:

O let heavy things tend to their centre; let light and ayery spiritts salute Heaven, and fly up to the circumference! That great and famous instrument of publishing the gospell and Knowledge of Christ Jesus, Christopher Columbus, as also Vesputius Americus, who (five yeares after Columbus) arrived here, gave this whole country and ymmeasurable continent . . . his own name, may teach us what progresse to make even in this glorious enterprise . . . Have we either lesse meanes, fainter spiritts, or a charity more cold, or a religion more shamefull, and afrayd to delate ytsel?³³

Admittedly, the author of this last quote, William Strachey, has added something to the Columbus topos which Hall has pointedly omitted, the imperative (with which the real Columbus was himself of course familiar) to propagate the Gospel. But if he had wanted to – if he had had different rhetorical ends – Strachey could just as easily have added material to the topos which would have made it into a sign for excessive

materialism, vanity, and concupiscence.³⁴ The Columbus topos was adjustable and portable, founded though it was in incontrovertible fact: that a single obscure individual had “certainly dared and certainly hoped,” and had ended up changing the world. “When all men rejected Christopher Columbus,” Captain John Smith wrote in trying to round up support for exploration and colonization, “that ever renowned Queen Izabell of Spain, could pawn her Jewels to support him; whom all the wise men (as they thought themselves) of that age contemned . . . [H]ath not England an Izabell, as well as Spain, nor yet a Columbus as well as Genoa?”³⁵

The Columbus topos was so prominent a vehicle of expression that it had a certain significance even when it was omitted, as in John Donne’s famous sermon to the Virginia company (1622), where Donne scrupulously avoided any historical references to imperialist discovery and conquest apart from those to be found in the narratives of the Old Testament. “*Wilt thou restore againe the kingdome of Israel?*” Donne says to the joint-stock holders. “No; not a temporall Kingdome; let not the riches and commodities of this World, be in your contemplation in your adventures.”³⁶

The Columbus topos was in every case, however it was inflected, positively or negatively, a vehicle for exploring the problem of hope. Was it possible to hope? And if so, for what? What was to be hoped for just then?³⁷ In his well known “Ode to the Virginia Voyage” (1606), written to mark the first of the Virginia Company’s sailings, Michael Drayton used the same rhetoric of a golden age restored that Columbus had used in his first dispatches from America, and that professional poets had for several years been applying to the reign of James I. “Ours to hold,” Drayton writes of the land about to be colonized, “VIRGINIA, / Earth’s onely paradise.”³⁸ A few years earlier, however, Francis Bacon had used the Columbus topos not to figure the hope for a return to prelapsarian innocence and leisure, but to indicate a challenge for scholars to surpass themselves, to sail beyond the Columns of Hercules of “a few received authors,” and, following upon the recent opening of “navigation and commerce,” venture upon “the further discovery of knowledge.”³⁹

The Columbus figure was a vehicle for investigating and expressing what hope might be. Hope might be the experience of primitivist yet apparently realistic longings, as in Drayton’s hopes for holding “Earth’s only paradise.” Hope might be the anticipation of an unknown yet prophetic and arduous future, as in Bacon’s hopes for the new science. Or hope might be neither the one nor the other, but rather, from another perspective, a surrender to vanity, delusion, narcissism, and greed, a turning

away from the experience of one's inherent sinfulness and weakness and from one's absolute reliance for salvation on the grace of God. At the opening of the seventeenth century hope could be any of these things and more; sometimes, as in Raleigh's simultaneously optimistic and pessimistic *History of the World*, it could be all of them at once.⁴⁰ But for whom could hope mean what it meant, or be what it was? Who had the hopes? And how especially, it might be asked, was it possible to hope, to occupy the position of a subject of hope, in a society whose authorities and orthodoxies worked militantly against the condition of worldly hopefulness? Orthodox religious teaching – the Anglican brand of Calvinism, developed as an official doctrine by the church leaders under Elizabeth and re-emphasized by James's bishops – taught that "life was necessarily imperfect," that until the Second Coming, at which time a portion of humanity would regain its felicity, humanity "was fallen, nature was harsh and this life could only offer a second-best."⁴¹ "*Love not the world, nor the things that are in the world,*" Robert Burton writes, quoting Scripture and echoing a commonplace of orthodox sermonology.⁴² At the same time, the political ideology that was crystallizing at the time of James's accession, as we have begun to see, provided a contrary, but also stultifying teaching: it taught that an age of wholeness had just been restored to England. It taught that through the agency of James, and by the grace of God, England had been perfected, and the historical destiny of the English-speaking people fulfilled. When John Donne cautioned the Virginia planters against setting their hopes on colonization simply for the sake of worldly gain, it is worth noting, he took the trouble to couple his remarks with a restatement of both sorts of teachings: in the face of redemptive expectations for the venture he urged the official anti-millenarian doctrine of the Anglican church ("It belongs not to us to know *Gods* times"); in the face of political and economic expectations he urged the restrictive idealism of absolute monarchy ("To be a *Kīng* signifies *Libertie* and *independency*, and *Supremacie*, to bee under no man, and to be a *Kīng* signifies *Abundance*, and *Omnisufficiencie*, to neede no man"). He was careful, in other words, to bind the worldly hopes of London merchants to both the otherworldly pessimism of High Church Calvinism and the ideological constraints of a sublimized state, in which only a king could "signifie . . . *Abundance*" and pretend to an autonomous political will.⁴³

But Donne was already speaking at a time when it behooved a leading churchman like himself to try to undo the significance of recent events which would ultimately contribute to the dissolution of Stuart absolutism. Earlier during James's reign, during what is commonly considered

to be the “high” period of Jacobean culture,⁴⁴ the worldly aspirations of the English people were less radically focused and less threatening to the state’s cultural integrity than those Donne seems to have divined in the ambitions of the Virginia company investors. I am not suggesting that there was no resistance to Jacobean absolutism, or that absolutism itself, in practice, was monolithic. The work of Barbara K. Lewalski on the courtly women writers of the period and of Deborah Shuger on seventeenth-century clerical writers both go to show that there were plenty of points of dispute and dissent *within* the dominant culture over which James presided.⁴⁵ Historians like Roy Strong and Malcolm Smuts, moreover, have drawn a well-documented picture of court culture in the time of James as a system based on at least three rival centers of power, divided among the king, the queen, and the Prince of Wales and their various partisans among the aristocracy, vying for patronage and privilege both at court and in the halls of Parliament whenever Parliament was in session.⁴⁶ And among the populace, moreover, there began to thrive subcultures of religious dissent with politically volatile overtones – recusants on the one side and disgruntled Puritans on the other. Whatever absolutism and its look of power may have entailed, the reach of absolutism was not totalitarian; it did not have the means (nor, really, the will either) to reach that far. But the question I am raising here has to do with the worldly *hope* that it was possible to entertain in the high period of Jacobean culture. Resistance may imply a kind of hope; but raising the issue of the existence of worldly hope in pre-modern society entails asking different kinds of issues than the hermeneutics of resistance usually require. So the question, again, is, how was it possible to *hope* in the England of James VI and I? What was it possible to hope for? And what would it mean to occupy the position of a subject of hope?

The question is raised in view of the fact of individuals’ *prospects* in early modern England. Life was short; death was ever present; scarcity and disease were recurring nightmares; if the extant medical literature is a fair indication, life was fraught as well with daily physical discomforts, indignities, and worries – many of them brought on by medical practice itself.⁴⁷ The majority of the subjects of England, moreover, were still ensnared by the rigid constraints of social hierarchy and patriarchal inheritance, as well as by the equally constraining cycles – natural and social – of a traditionally organized, albeit changing, agricultural economy.⁴⁸ Orthodox Calvinist pessimism and absolutist ideology were in this respect merely new versions of old doctrines. And they simply confirmed from above the truth that the vast majority of English subjects

suffered from below, that the prospects of life were closed rather than open – comfortably closed perhaps (it is not in any case for us to judge what we are incapable of knowing firsthand, the quality of subaltern life in a traditional society), but closed all the same, providing no *outlook* for a change in one's material conditions, no sighting of new possibilities, of new horizons of social experience. The prospect of hope was reserved for the next world, and the next life, however close or far that next world and next life were understood to be.⁴⁹

And yet against the constraints of life, natural and cultural, political and social, secular and religious, material and mental, there was nevertheless earthly hope: hopes for physical health and comfort and pleasure, for large and small “delights,” as authors often put it; hopes for finding requited romantic love, familial affection, and social fellowship; hopes for conceiving and bearing children and raising them to adulthood; hopes for prospering within the context of what a Jacobean preacher might have called one's *portion* or *lot* or *trade* in life (and what Joseph Hall called the necessary, limiting “circumference” of one's “estate”). The list could go on, including all those things that individuals might reasonably want out of life, even in an age of severe material and social constraints: the pleasures of the table, of sports, of “revels”; recognition, so far as one's talents made one recognizable; dignity, so far as one's station allowed it; power, so far as one was capable of exercising it; love and sexual pleasure, with their many promises, joys, and disappointments; life itself, and the continuation of life, the abundance of life carrying on, propagating itself, an active process from which one could not only benefit but to which most individuals could make an active contribution. “Our hope,” the fertile scion of a family was often called; and indeed a nearly redemptive quality was often ascribed to the survival of an estate through patrilineal succession and the propagation of life under the conditions an “estate” might provide. The idea of posterity, to which we have just seen Hall's Beroaldus somewhat comically allude, the idea that succeeding generations of men and women would remember or otherwise continue to experience the effects of the “acts and monuments” of the present generation, was only a high-minded corollary to the general appetite for contributing to the growth and sustenance of life. Increasingly, moreover, individuals were thinking about commercial, geopolitical, religious posterity, as prospects of world trade and world evangelism began to open, first on the Spanish and Portuguese, Catholic, models, and now on the Dutch model as well. Nor did individuals of the time, it appears, fail to pay their debts to the present, and attempt to extract a measure

of mental and physical well-being from the world. There was much to be done, much to be experienced, much to be conquered and acquired; there were many “pleasing beauties” (as Robert Burton once put it) to enjoy. “Care and sorowe bryngeth in age and deth,” a sixteenth-century physician wrote in a book of popular medicine; “wherefore let every man be mery.”⁵⁰

But there were limits too. A number of hopes that, say, an educated member of Christopher Hill’s “industrious sort”⁵¹ might entertain were inherently heterodox and transgressive, violating the boundaries, real or perceived, of orthodox values and the social frameworks supporting them. In the eyes of someone like Joseph Hall there were far too many of these hopes and far too many people going about trying to hope them, beginning with characters like Beroaldus and Mercurius Britannicus, who seem to have had parallels in the real world too. Transgressive hopes required the kind of daring presumption that Beroaldus is made to exemplify; and a “presumptuous man,” as Hall would put it in another work, “is nothing but hope out of his wits; a high house upon weak pillars.”⁵² Or as the similarly minded Richard Braithwaite would put it a couple of decades later, “those many projects which [the presumptuous man] hath devised, those impossible aymes he hath contrived, those ayrie Turrets he hath reared, fall in the end to nothing,” betraying nothing but “the folly of him that formed them.”⁵³ Inherently transgressive hopes called upon their subjects (however prudently or imprudently, however shrewdly or madly) to look beyond the limits of the given, to look outward and forward toward new horizons of expectation – toward what a sober-minded man like Braithwaite would regard as “impossible aymes” and “ayrie Turrets.”

Between orthodox and heterodox hope, between hoping for customary and hoping for uncustomary things, there is a great qualitative and structural difference, even if the line between the two is not always distinct. It is easy to sustain an orthodox hope; it is expected; it is encouraged; it is propounded in the pulpit, recited at school, endlessly drilled into one by one’s superiors at home, prompted by popular wisdom in all the usual venues of popular wisdom, including the popular theater, and frequently promoted by political authorities in measures reckoned to be necessary to the public good.⁵⁴ It is the very lifeblood of a socio-cultural system that its members should not only obey the same laws but hope for pretty much the same things. But heterodox hope, transgressive hope – that is something different. For in the first place, it requires a kind of looking ahead, or afar, or askance; it requires the perception of an objective which